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NOTES

The life-history of the human blood fluke is undoubtedly one of the most important of unsolved problems in parasitology. For many years, in fact ever since the discovery of the adult parasite in Egypt by Bilharz in 1852, this question has commanded the attention of able investigators, but practically no positive results have followed their work. Local tradition supported by circumstantial evidence led to general acceptance of the view that infection with the African species, *Schistosoma haematobium,* was acquired by bathing in infected waters. After extended study in regions of pronounced infection Looss concluded that infection took place directly through the skin and that the infecting stage was the miracidium, which underwent metamorphosis in the body of the final host, probably in the liver.

The discovery of a new human species (*Schistosoma japonicum*), was augmented by its later demonstrated occurrence in various small mammals and experimentation became possible. Utilizing this opportunity, Leiper and Atkinson recently made a trip to the East and as a result of their work, which was unfortunately cut short by the war, have published* most important studies on the life history of this fluke.

After a search lasting nearly three months and a river journey of a thousand miles, they secured a dog so heavily infected that the evacuations consisted of mucus and blood crowded with eggs. The local mollusks were placed in water swarming with miracidia and were watched to detect those species which exercised a pronounced attraction for the free-swimming fluke embryos. A small brown snail of a new genus, *Katayama nosophora,* displayed such an attraction, "The small dark head and foot speedily became festooned with little white specks and it was obvious from the agitated manner in which the snail repeatedly attempted to brush them off that their presence was a cause of considerable irritation."

In the liver of this snail were sporocysts containing cercariae with bifid tails. The cercaria had a short bifurcated gut with no trace of a pharynx. Laboratory-bred mice were exposed to infection in water containing free cercariae from the teased snail liver. At Aden on the home voyage the few mollusks living were sacrificed, and the last mouse was exposed to infection. When examined in London a month later this mouse contained live male and female blood flukes in copula in the portal vessels. These factors show conclusively that this schistosome has a life-cycle like that of the digenetic trematodes.

The cercaria is covered by minute spines, the oral sucker is enormous, equal to about one-third the length of the body, and urn shaped. Between the lateral branches of the intestine are several masses on each side, the undeveloped sex glands. The snail which functioned as secondary host though abundant proved to be entirely new.

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* Brit. Med. Jour., January, 1915; China Med. Jour., May, 1915.